

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE | COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

# BuildingBridges

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Among the challenges of COVID-19:  
blurred lines between work and home

# BuildingBridges

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse



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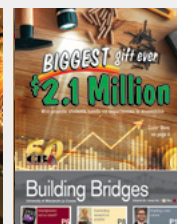
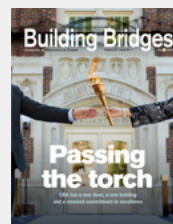


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*With four children to care for and dozens of students to teach, associate professor of marketing Maggie McDermott had her hands full working from home during COVID-19. "Finding a quiet space where I could focus on work," she says, "was a bit of a challenge."*



# Caregiver conundrum

**For faculty caregivers, pandemic creates a difficult balancing act**

**I**t turns out that the only thing harder than being a professor and a parent is fulfilling the tasks of each simultaneously.

From crying toddlers to bogged-down WiFi to an overall lack of free time, UW-La Crosse College of Business Administration faculty have had their hands full teaching from home during COVID-19.

These challenges have been especially pronounced among faculty who are also caregivers. The traditional borders between work life and home life have all but disappeared.

"For caregivers of children, one of the biggest challenges is just juggling work and providing care or facilitating schooling for your kids, because those societal supports for working parents are no longer there," explains Nicole Gullekson, a member of the UWL and System-wide caregiving task forces.

"For some, this means there might be a kid yelling or popping in during a class session, and for many, it means that they are working in some capacity all the time," she says. "It's hard to separate your time so you can either be with your family in meaningful ways or have uninterrupted worktime. It's exhausting and burning people out."

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The past several months have also brought many memorable moments — incidents that are easier to laugh about in retrospect. Christine Ascencio, an assistant professor of management, had one such moment during the first session of one of her fall courses.

In the middle of class, she stepped away for a moment to usher her not-quite-3-year-old son — who had wandered into her office — out of the room. She locked the door behind him.

A minute later, back at her desk, “I heard noise from the doorknob and then — as my son realized that I had locked him out — banging on the door, accompanied by yells of ‘Mommy! Open the door!’” she remembers. “My son banged on the door so hard that it flew open. He came storming in with his hands in tiny fists, scowling at me like it was the worst thing I had ever done, while I sat dumbfounded at what had just happened.

“I wasn’t sure at the time if students could see what happened, since they all had their cameras off and there were no audible or chat reactions. I recently asked a smaller group of students if they remembered the situation and had seen it. They kindly confirmed that they had.”

Not even deans are immune.

Interim CBA Dean TJ Brooks heard some unexpected news from Provost Betsy Morgan during a recent call: “TJ, your coworker is trying to crawl out the window.” His 3-year-old son was standing on the couch, reaching for a window, apparently attempting to escape. “This was, of course, after he started yelling at me to be quiet because I was interrupting his movie,” Brooks noted.



## “The challenge for me is to find a work-life balance”

**Mehtap Eklund**

With roughly a year of online teaching under their belt, many faculty have discovered that you can either have a family with children, or you can have a peaceful home work environment. But you cannot have both.

Mehtap Eklund, an assistant professor of accountancy, has no complaints about her home office arrangement, but that’s because her children have fur.

“My home is a very silent and cozy place to work with my coworkers: my private chef husband and two fur babies,” says Eklund, who invited her students to do a show and tell with their pets.

Even without a large, loud family, Eklund says it was a struggle adjusting to remote teaching.

“The challenge for me is to find a work-life balance,” she says. “My working hours became way more than eight hours per day and five days per week. Zoom fatigue is another challenge. I’m still working to find a way to combat these challenges.”

Maggie McDermott, an associate professor of marketing, found that the best way to work from home is to get out of the house altogether.

With four children, McDermott struggled to find peace and quiet and reliable internet. So, she gathered her things and set up a WiFi hotspot in the family’s 1993 Winnebago, which became her classroom for most of the fall.

“It’s not like one of those nice vintage Airstreams. It’s much more like Cousin Eddie’s RV in ‘Christmas Vacation,’” she joked. “It’s not nice at all, but it is quiet, and it allowed me to get away from the chaos in the house. My background wasn’t great during calls, but I had my Keurig set up and everything.”

McDermott spent long hours in the Winnebago, and found that she and her students were able to make the best of an unusual situation. She also developed a familial affection for that antique camper, which even has a name.

“Bertha,” she says, “was a great office.”





*For a while, McDermott made her home office in the family's 1993 Winnebago. It was the only place she was guaranteed some alone time. "My background wasn't great during calls," she notes. "But I had my Keurig set up and everything."*

# Piece of cake

SBDC helps local baker launch her business



*Jen Barney, owner of Meringue Bakery & Café in downtown La Crosse, credits the UW-La Crosse Small Business Development Center for helping get her business off the ground amid COVID-19.*

Barney has always had a passion for baking. But it wasn't until college that she believed it could be her career, or that she could one day open her own business.

"I was in my mid-20s, going to school to become a social worker and I saw a commercial for Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts," she recalls. "It was like a lightning bolt — I realized I could combine food with art and get paid to do it. It was like, 'Whoa, I have to change everything that I'm doing.'"

Barney attended Le Cordon Bleu and went to work in bakeries and pastry shops in La Crosse, the Twin Cities and New Mexico.

The Stanley, Wisconsin, native eventually settled in La Crosse, running a bakery out of her family's basement.

Her big break came in 2017, when she won her first of two consecutive Holiday Baking Championships on the Food Network. After talking it through with her husband, she decided to leverage her success and name recognition into a brick-and-mortar store.

It's not just Meringue Bakery. The SBDC provides no-cost consultations and affordable educational programming to entrepreneurs and business owners throughout the Coulee Region.

In 2019, the SBDC worked with more than 425 business owners, assisted with the creation of 38 new businesses, and facilitated nearly \$8 million in small business financing from regional lenders and investors.

"Starting a business is hard, but the SBDC is committed to helping business owners reach their potential," says Anne Hlavacka, director of the SBDC. "We find the enthusiasm and hard work of small business owners to be remarkable. We really enjoy supporting them in their efforts to turn ideas into viable businesses."





*“They probably do 50% of the work, taking data and spitting it out in an organized way, and explaining things in a way I can understand them,” Barney notes. “Terri Urbanek (business counselor for the SBDC) has been such a great resource. She can’t get rid of me.”*

“We said that if I was going to do it, then I should do it now,” she says. “I won’t always be the new, cool thing on the block.”

But with a pandemic, not even Food Network fame can ensure a smooth launch.

Barney had to delay her store’s March 2020 opening, and for two months, customers were limited to online orders and instore pickup.

Starting her business during a pandemic has also clouded Barney’s view of what constitutes a successful first year.

“I don’t know what my numbers should be, and I don’t have back data to compare them to,” she explains. “We’re definitely not losing money, but it’s surreal and scary when you don’t know where you are.”

Barney says the SBDC has helped ease those fears, while empowering her to make informed decisions about her business’ future.

Getting paid to pursue her passion, she notes, is the icing on the cake.

“I love that people come to us when they want to be comforted or want to celebrate a major life milestone,” she says. “It’s so cool that we get to be a part of that.”



Meringue Bakery offers an array of cakes, pastries and freshly made sandwiches.







*Marissa Eckrote, '16, is back on campus this fall as an associate lecturer in the Economics Department. "As soon as the opportunity presented itself," she says, "I knew it was what I wanted to do this year."*



# Back where she started

Instructor jumped at opportunity to return to her alma mater

**F**or Marissa Eckrote, starting a new job meant coming full circle.

Eckrote, who graduated from UW-La Crosse in 2016 with degrees in mathematics and economics, is back on campus this fall as an associate lecturer in the Economics Department.

After pursuing her doctorate at Michigan State University the past few years, she says it's gratifying to return to a small, tight-knit campus she knows so well.

"I am so happy to be back in La Crosse and teaching at UWL. I loved my time in East Lansing, but being at a smaller school where I get to know my students is really nice," explains Eckrote, who is filling in for Mary Hamman while the latter is on sabbatical. (Hamman was recently awarded the inaugural Swenson Baier Engaged Faculty Fellowship.)

"Getting back here was always something that I had in the back of my mind, but I knew the chances of a job opening up when I was looking for a job was going to be slim," she says. "As soon as the opportunity presented itself, I knew it was what I wanted to do this year."

Several years ago, Eckrote made a similarly speedy decision to attend UWL.

The native of Plover, Wisconsin, toured a number of large universities that didn't quite win her over.

She gravitated to UWL in part because of her dad, Thane Eckrote, who graduated from

UWL in 1989 and played on the 1985 national championship football team.

"I knew UWL was a special place for him, so I figured it would be worth checking out," she notes. "I knew almost immediately when I got here that this is where I wanted to go. I loved how compact campus was and that the classes were small, and you weren't just a number or a face in the crowd."

**"As soon as the opportunity presented itself, I knew it was what I wanted to do this year."**

Her highlights as an undergraduate included working on research projects in the Mathematics & Statistics Department and presenting that research at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research in North Carolina.

In 2016, she won the Murphy Award for Academic Excellence, reserved for the university's top graduating senior.

"It really felt like the ultimate way to end my academic career at UWL," she says.

As a faculty member, Eckrote's specialty areas include health and labor economics, with a sub-interest in econometric methods used to conduct empirical research in those areas.

This fall, she is teaching three sections of microeconomics and public policy, along with one section of health economics.

Eckrote is also working on a handful of papers with Hamman, who was one of her biggest mentors during her undergraduate years.

"Even though Mary wasn't my assigned advisor she took me in and advised me through the entire graduate school application process," Eckrote says. "She continues to be my go-to person for advice on the profession."

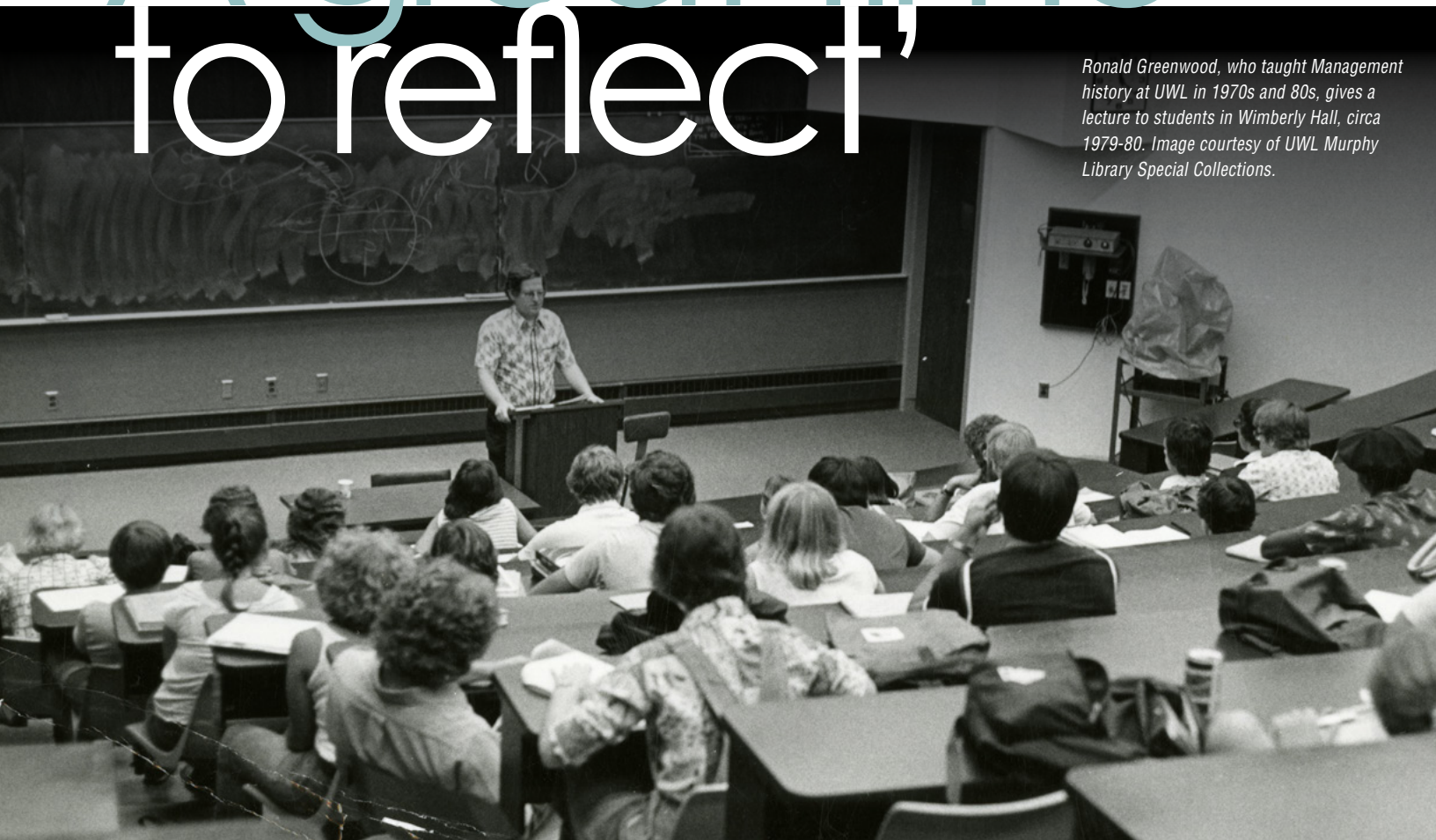
It's been a challenging start to her first semester. COVID-19 has once again forced in-person classes online — at least temporarily — and resident students have had to adjust to sheltering in place in their dorms.

Eckrote says her colleagues have been extremely supportive during the transition, as has UWL's Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning. Students, she says, have "been great in adapting to whatever is thrown at us."

"As difficult as it has been on this side, I can only imagine how difficult it is on the student side," she says. "I just wanted to let them know that I understand that it is a crazy semester, and that the faculty care about them and want to help them as much as we can."

# 'A great time to reflect'

*Ronald Greenwood, who taught Management history at UWL in 1970s and 80s, gives a lecture to students in Wimberly Hall, circa 1979-80. Image courtesy of UWL Murphy Library Special Collections.*



**U**W-La Crosse's College of Business Administration has seen a lot in 50 years.

Since its founding in 1971, the college has adapted to radical shifts in business and technology — from the advent of the internet, to globalization, to a world-altering pandemic.

Along the way, CBA faculty have instructed and inspired thousands who have gone on to successful careers as business owners, economists, marketers, corporate executives, entrepreneurs, financial advisers and more. And it promises to do so for another 50 years and beyond.

"This is a great time to reflect on the CBA's commitment to excellence and everything the college has accomplished over the past half-century," notes TJ Brooks, interim dean of the CBA. "And the future looks incredibly bright. With a state-of-the-art facility, outstanding students and faculty, and close partnerships with the local business community, we're in an excellent position to build upon all our success."

The history of business education at UWL begins long before the founding of the CBA.

The college has its roots in the economics program initiated in the 1950s, which was offered as both a minor in the College of Letters and Sciences and a service to the teacher education social studies curriculum.

In the early 1960s, UWL added majors in business administration and finance, which also proved popular. With almost 40% of the graduates in Letters and Sciences majoring in business, and with increasing demands from employers, UWL soon introduced a marketing major. But adding the occasional major was not enough.



## CBA marks 50 years of educational excellence



Momentum was building for a full-fledged business school, and in 1971, the School of Business Administration was created. The school split from Letters and Sciences a few years later and was renamed to the College of Business Administration in 1981. The following spring, the Small Business Development Center was established in North (now Wimberly) Hall, to help local entrepreneurs or business owners launch or grow new companies.

### Globalization, technology key in the '80s, '90s

As globalization and new technology transformed the business world in the 1980s and 90s, the CBA transformed as well.

Bill Colclough, who spent 35 years with the college after arriving in 1980 — including 10 years as dean — remembers it as a time of dramatic change.

“We were adding courses, growing the college and adapting to the world,” says Colclough, noting that the CBA grew from three departments to six with the addition of the International Business, Information Systems and Collaborative Internet MBA programs.



*Business students use an early computer at UWL, circa 1982.  
Image courtesy of UWL Murphy Library Special Collections.*

“There was a continuous effort to identify critical learning outcomes and enhance the curriculum around topics like globalization, information systems, ethics, leadership, communication skills, sustainability and engagement,” he explains.

One of these efforts under Colclough was the creation of an East Central European scholarship program, which allowed students from the former Soviet Bloc countries to study capitalism and other Western business practices at UWL.

Looking back, “I’m most proud of leading our globalization efforts and helping grow the CBA into a very well-respected and high-quality program,” Colclough says.

The CBA has also developed a number of local partnerships to enhance student learning and support local businesses. The most prominent example is the Small Business Development Center, which works with local business owners and entrepreneurs to facilitate business growth and improvement, and to launch successful new companies. The center offers a variety of programs, including no-cost consulting, low-cost entrepreneurial education and strategic facilitation.

“The SBDC’s work in the community is a very tangible demonstration of the impact the CBA and the university has in the region,” says Anne Hlavacka, director of the SBDC. “The SBDC has helped sustain the interest and energy of entrepreneurs of all ages and backgrounds. It’s rewarding to be able to assist an individual with an idea and support the initiative to create and grow a business.”

Plus, she says, “the opportunities to work with area businesses and entrepreneurs present real-life experiences for faculty and students.”



*CBA students work in a computer lab in the 1990s.*

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## Menard Initiative, Wittich Hall renovation speak to the CBA's future

In the history of the CBA, there have never been more opportunities or more challenges than in the past two years.

In 2019, the CBA received a \$2.1 million gift from the family of John Menard Jr. — the largest gift in the 110-year history of UWL. The resulting Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research funds everything from scholarships to faculty fellowships to real-world learning opportunities.

In spring 2020, of course, the college responded to COVID-19 by moving courses online and finding new, creative ways to reach students and assist the community.

And in the fall of 2020, the college moved into the newly renovated Wittich Hall, which has been updated with modern office suites and student work areas, an electronic ticker tape showing stock market updates, and a sprawling patio on the building's west side.

"It's a new building, a new era and a new opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to excellence," TJ Brooks, Interim Dean says. "The CBA has shown a remarkable ability to evolve with the changes and challenges we see in the world, and we're excited to see what will come in the next 50 years."

**The College of Business Administration's 50th anniversary celebration will be held Oct. 22 and 23, 2021.**

Events will include campus tours, a Wittich Hall ribbon cutting and open house, and an alumni pub crawl — health and safety guidelines permitting. On-line registration is now open. For more information, visit [www.uwlax.edu/cba/50th-anniversary](http://www.uwlax.edu/cba/50th-anniversary).











# A REMARKABLE RESEARCHER

**Nabamita Dutta  
receives inaugural  
Menard faculty  
fellowship**

**U**W-La Crosse Professor Nabamita Dutta loves guiding her students through the world of economics — whether it's on campus or in a virtual classroom.

But it can be a challenge to find the proper time-energy balance between her teaching responsibilities and her main professional passion: research.

A new faculty fellowship will help her and other professors in the College of Business Administration have the best of both worlds.

Dutta is the first recipient of the Menard Family Faculty Fellowship — a program that supports CBA faculty researchers through stipends and teaching relief. Dutta plans to use the fellowship to continue advancing her research portfolio, focusing on entrepre-

neurship, culture and gender, and how the three intersect and interrelate.

"I'm really happy to see Menards supporting faculty research, and I'm excited to be the first recipient of this fellowship," she says. "Research is extremely challenging, especially with growing competition from institutions across the globe. It is even more challenging for faculty to tackle



*Economics Professor Nabamita Dutta has received the inaugural Menard Family Faculty Fellowship — a program that supports College of Business Administration faculty through stipends and teaching relief.*

**“Professor Nabamita Dutta is a prolific scholar ... and she produces research that has the potential for serious impact.”**

**Adam Hoffer, director of UWL’s Menard initiative**

current research challenges at a heavy teaching institution such as UWL. Therefore, opportunities like my fellowship are very welcome, and will further the scope and quality of UWL’s research presence, eventually leading to significant impacts on many local and global scales.”

Dutta’s research interests can be classified into three categories: how institutions shape various development outcomes, how institutions interact with macroeconomic variables (such as growth or income), and what factors shape institutions over time.

A sample focus is how certain traits, such as individualism and the fear of failure, affect male and female entrepreneurship.

“Researching in my areas of interest helps enhance my knowledge and get a better grasp on the subject matter,” Dutta notes. “For the upper-level classes I teach, it is very important to expose students to current and ongoing research and to help them contextualize the findings on current issues.”

But it’s not a one-way street. Dutta’s students also inspire her to investigate new

topics. “Many times, explaining recent findings in the literature to my students leads almost naturally to engaging discussions on specific topics, and then all of a sudden a new research idea will hit me,” she explains. “In this way, and others, the processes of teaching and of research are complementary to me.”

Dutta has authored 48 peer-reviewed articles, her work has more than 1,100 citations on Google Scholar, and she serves on the editorial board of the international research journal: *Economic Modelling*. Her research has been covered by the BBC, New York Magazine and Ideas for India.

A native of Kolkata, India, Dutta moved to the United States in 2004 to study at West Virginia University. She earned her doctorate in 2009 and joined UWL later that year.

Adam Hoffer, director of the Menard Initiative, says Dutta is an exemplary professor and researcher to receive the initiative’s inaugural fellowship.

“Professor Nabamita Dutta is a prolific scholar ... and she produces research that has the potential for serious impact,” he says. “At the Menard Family Initiative, we

pursue fundamental, scientific truth above all else. Based on scientific findings like those Dr. Dutta researches and uncovers, we hope to inform solutions to create a better world for as many people as possible.”

## About the Menard Initiative

The Menard Family Midwest Initiative for Economic Engagement and Research supports scholarships, research projects and hands-on learning opportunities in UWL’s College of Business Administration.

The initiative started in 2019 after a \$2.1 million gift from the Menard family — the largest single donation in university history.

For more information about the initiative, visit [uwlax.edu/foundation/your-impact/economic-engagement-research/](http://uwlax.edu/foundation/your-impact/economic-engagement-research/)

**A** UW-La Crosse faculty fellow aims to help area businesses and entrepreneurs harness the power of data by expanding data literacy.

Economics Professor Mary Hamman has partnered with UWL Extended Learning to offer a series of free online workshops during the spring and summer of 2021. The DataGeek workshop series will grow participants' data literacy and expose them to software like R and Tableau to highlight creative ways of using data to generate business insights.

"Organizations have transformed from a model where data expertise was concentrated within a small group of roles to expecting data literacy across all roles," says Hamman, who is coordinating the workshops as part of her **Swenson Baier Engaged Faculty Fellowship** — UWL's first philanthropically funded faculty fellowship. "However, based on a study by Qlik and Accenture, only 21% of the global workforce feels confident in their data literacy."

According to Hamman, each of the five workshops will include customized, one-on-one learning opportunities. They will be beneficial to all, she says, regardless of experience with data or technology.

The sessions are online and free to attend, and will explore a number of topics and competencies:

- Transitioning from Excel to R: Focus on Learning High Value-Added Skills
- Clean Up Crew: Skills for Fixing Messy Data

- Reproducible Reports: How to use R to Automate Reporting
- Veracious Visualization: Creating Dashboards and Graphs to Convey Clear and Truthful Insights
- Data Access Through APIs: Using Census API to Gather Data for Your Business

Hamman says the data skills taught in the workshops can help streamline workflows and limit errors, make complex statistics easier to visualize, and establish a shared vocabulary and philosophy across a company.

"If your organization wants to infuse data literacy across all roles, you need to have a language that everyone speaks," she notes. "Tossing around terms like 'AI' and 'unsupervised learning' without any real idea of what that actually means just alienates people outside the silo of experts. These workshops will focus on the basic data literacy skills relevant for everyone. Novices will learn new terms and experts will improve their ability to translate complex topics to colleagues in non-expert roles."

Each workshop culminates in a live project day that will further ensure that the skills participants learn in the workshops can be effectively applied in the workplace.

"For business owners and entrepreneurs, I think the biggest advantages of this workshop series are the customization through one-on-one discussions of your needs and goals, and the use of free open-source software, so you don't have to make an investment to use what you've learned when

the workshop ends," Hamman says. "Once your instructor understands your goals and the structure of the data you have to work with, she can help you see the applications of workshop skills to your task."

## About the workshops

The DataGeek workshops will run from March 1 to Aug. 21. Each of the workshops will be offered in a four-week format and a one-week format. For the dates of a particular workshop, check the schedule at the link below.

Registration is free and open to all, although there is a capacity of 30 participants per workshop.

To register or find more information, please visit [www.uwlax.edu/ex/datageek/register](http://www.uwlax.edu/ex/datageek/register).

## About the fellowship

Funding for the Swenson Baier Engaged Faculty Fellowship is provided by 1985 College of Business Administration graduate Scott Swenson and his spouse, Cynthia Baier.

It is UWL's first philanthropically funded faculty fellowship, supporting the work of business faculty who are engaged in industry.

Hamman is the first recipient of the fellowship.

## About Extended Learning

UWL Extended Learning provides a variety of programming related professional development, personal enrichment, and organizational and business solutions.

**For more information, visit**  
[www.uwlax.edu/ex](http://www.uwlax.edu/ex).



# Digging into data

Online workshops to promote  
data literacy among businesses,  
entrepreneurs



Economics Professor Mary Hamman has partnered with UWL Extended Learning to offer a series of free online workshops promoting data literacy among business owners and entrepreneurs. The project is part of Hamman's Swenson Baier Engaged Faculty Fellowship.

# PIVOTING DURING THE PANDEMIC



## Students sell loungewear meant to spark 'meaningful conversations'

When University of Wisconsin-La Crosse senior Olivia Steingraber started college, she set goals to work in sales or marketing for a large corporation. But, in a new climate of COVID-19, the outlook for her corporate dream job is not good, she says. That's why Steingraber and a close friend are already shifting to self-employment.

"This is what we are doing to combat COVID, and it is our dream as well," says Olivia. "We want to chase it if we can."

Steingraber is growing an online retail store and blog she and UW-Madison student Megan Kronseer launched in early 2020 that could become their best opportunity to build a career in a global pandemic. They hope their business, TWENTIES, can meet needs they see in the world for meaningful conversations — and loungewear. Their online retail store sells embroidered T-shirts, sweatshirts and sweatpants with faith-based and motivational messages such as "More grace" and

*UW-La Crosse marketing major Olivia Steingraber, left, and her business partner, UW-Madison student Megan Kronseer, wear T-shirts from their business.*

"We can't do this alone." They hope to inspire more conversation during a difficult time.

"We want to connect humans in any way we can," explains Steingraber. "We want everyone to ask: 'What is on your sweatshirt?'"

Steingraber, a UWL marketing major, is in her final year on campus. Although the pandemic has meant an atypical senior year, she feels lucky to have a full-time job (in addition to her new business) and scholarships that have helped her pay her own way through school. After college, she plans to continue in the creative marketing and sales vein and continue to grow TWENTIES.



# Seniors in the workforce

Study examines how changing landscape affects older workers

A new study led by a UW-La Crosse economics professor will examine how the changing labor landscape is affecting older workers.

John Nunley, chair of the Economics Department, recently received a \$131,000 grant from the Social Security Administration and has begun work with his research partner and co-author, R. Alan Seals from Auburn University.

“The tasks performed by workers have changed dramatically over the last 50 years,” Nunley explains. “The demand for workers to complete repetitive tasks has fallen considerably, whereas the demand for the combination of social and analytical tasks has risen. It is important to study older workers because they will be a large share of the total labor market.”

According to Nunley, Baby Boomers are retiring later than previous generations due to insufficient savings — which will likely be

exacerbated by COVID-19. By 2026, he says, one out of every four works in the United States will be over the age of 55.

Advancements in technology have caused many physically intensive jobs to be phased out of the labor market. But it’s unclear how the shift away from manual labor will affect older workers — who represent an outsized percentage of the workforce in management, community and social services, education, maintenance, office and administration, and the military.

“It is likely that the task content of these jobs has changed in different ways across these occupations,” Nunley notes. “We will document these changes and examine how they affect labor market outcomes — such as employment and earnings — for older workers.”

Nunley hopes the study will help inform policymakers and fill a knowledge gap in

the economics community. He expects it to wrap up by mid-summer 2021.

The project is part of a series of grants received by the Center for Financial Security at UW-Madison.



John Nunley



# Sharing her knowledge

Phyllis Creek '85, turns to teaching after successful business career





niversity Commu-  
nications recently caught up  
with Phyllis Creek,'85,  
who joined UW-LaCrosse  
as an associate lecturer

after a three-decade career in business and  
human resources.

**Q: What are some highlights from your career?**

**A:** I have more than 30 years of experience in talent (HR) and business operational activities. My most recent employer was Deloitte LLC, the world's largest professional service and accounting firm. The last 11 years at Deloitte, I was the senior advisor and global mobility deputy, managing a large domestic and global remote team. I oversaw the U.S. and India global mobility programs and processes, drove service excellence and continuous improvement across global mobility, and acted as an executive sponsor of global mobility initiatives. My team deployed over 10,000 employees in and out of the U.S. annually. Prior to Deloitte, I worked in several industries such as healthcare, information media and technology.

**Q: What is your specialty area, and what do you enjoy about teaching it?**

**A:** My specialty area is human resources with a focus on global mobility (also known as international human resources). I started my career as an intern working 40 hours a week for free! After completing my six-month internship, the company hired me as a senior compensation analyst. Compensation was the only area of HR I did not study, but I accepted the job and was/am very happy for the opportunity. I worked in compensation for three years before moving to employee relations and then to general HR. In 2008, I was given the opportunity to lead a strategic project on global mobility.

As I worked on the project, I realized that my past knowledge of all the other areas of HR was being leveraged. Thus, global mobility became my "perfect job." I really enjoy sharing my knowledge and experiences and working with colleagues all over the world. The situation and obstacles I needed to manage over the years became great stories for teaching.

**Q: Did you have much teaching experience before coming to UWL?**

**A:** Prior to UWL, I had not taught in the university setting but had taught in the business setting. Deloitte has a "university" (DU) in Texas. DU is used to develop employees' leadership, consultative and technical skills. I had several opportunities to train in this setting. I also have developed and delivered several HR trainings for many of my past employers. The biggest challenge in transitioning from the business world to education has been the teaching format: online. I was a remote worker for the past 11 years and loved working virtually, but I have found that the students are not fond of online classes. The students are not as engaged online, which is different than in a work setting. Employees working remotely are very engaged and collaborative.

**Q: What do you remember from attending UWL in the 1980s?**

**A:** I have a Bachelor of Science in psychology from UWL (1985), a Master of Arts in industrial psychology from Roosevelt University in Chicago (1987) and am certified through Project Management Institute (PMI) as a Project Management Professional (PMP), WorldatWork as a Certified Compensation Professional (CCP) and Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) as a Senior Professional Human Resources (SPHR). My educational experience at UWL

was outstanding. I was very homesick as a freshman and sophomore, but my floormates rallied around me and helped me through it. I loved my time in Drake Hall and the annual "Drake Days" where the floors competed. I remember a very rough ultimate Frisbee game, which my floor won and gave us the win for the competition overall. I also met my significant other, Jeffrey, my first week my freshman year, and we started dating my senior year (36 years and counting). I've also maintained a few close friendships from my college years. My freshman year, I was a Brownie leader for a local chapter of the Girl Scouts — that was an experience!

**Q: How did you find the right career path?**

**A:** During my education at UWL, I was focused on becoming a counselor. However, after a summer internship at an abuse shelter, I realized being a counselor was not going to be a good fit. I needed more variety in my career's daily activities. Professor Wood in the Psychology Department recommended I investigate industrial/organizational psychology. It would allow me to take my education into the work environment, including my counseling skills. His advice headed me into the direction of a business career.

**Q: What's your advice to students or recent grads trying to start their career in business?**

**A:** My advice is to accept the challenges and various roles offered to you. Many of the positions offered to me early in my career I felt "underqualified for," but the leaders I was working with saw something different. You also need to be your own advocate — if you wait for the perfect role or offer, you will miss out on experiences that will lead you to your "perfect" job. Finally, remember that coworkers will remember you for what you left behind when you leave a role or position, not what you did when you were there.

*Phyllis Creek and her significant other, Jeffrey, who met as UWL students in the 1980s. After a successful career in business and human resources, Creek recently joined UWL as an associate lecturer in the College of Business Administration.*

# Top 10 — once again

**UW MBA Consortium  
ranked among  
nation's best**

**F**or the third consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report has ranked the University of Wisconsin MBA Consortium among the top 10 programs in the nation in its Best Online MBA Programs rankings.



**Jessica Franson**

The Consortium — a collaborative among UW-La Crosse, UW-Eau Claire and UW-Oshkosh — placed 10th in the 2021 rankings, the program's second-best placement since U.S. News began ranking online programs in 2015. The program also placed eighth in the Best Online MBA Programs for Veterans rankings and 17th in the Best Online General Management MBA Programs rankings.

"We are pleased to once again be recognized among the top online MBA programs in the nation," says Jessica Franson, Consortium managing director. "We strive to provide students with opportunities to reach their personal and professional goals through our flexible and personalized program structure. It's an honor to have these efforts recognized."

Paula Lentz, Consortium academic director, added: "The recognition is a testament to the creative, visionary leadership of our faculty and staff, who are committed to providing students with an outstanding MBA experience."

The UW MBA Consortium is the only such program in the Upper Midwest to crack the top 20 in the 2021 U.S. News rankings. The organization evaluated 324 online MBA programs in creating its list.

Rankings are determined by factors such as admissions selectivity, reputation for excellence among peer institutions, and academic and career support services offered to students.

Having served students virtually for more than two decades, the UW MBA Consortium has expanded significantly over the last few



**Paula Lentz**

years. In 2021, the program will see its 700th graduate.

Students credit the strong academics and hands-on approach of instructors for helping make coursework relevant and engaging.

"We pride ourselves on the diverse array of academic and professional experiences our faculty bring to the courses as they engage students in authentic, integrated and applicable learning experiences," Franson notes.

For more information about the UW MBA Consortium or the U.S. News & World Report's 2021 rankings, contact Jessica Franson at [mba@uwec.edu](mailto:mba@uwec.edu).



# ECONOMIC EXPERTISE

## Profs share insight on personal finance topics

*Two UW-La Crosse economics professors recently shared their expertise with a pair of personal finance websites.*

*Lisa Giddings covered the ins and outs of compound interest with MoneyGeek, while Sheida Babakhani Teimouri discussed the details of secured credit cards with WalletHub.*

*Read an excerpt and find links to the full interviews below.*



### Lisa Giddings on compound interest

**Q: How can compound interest affect you in a negative way (i.e., credit cards)?**

**A:** Compound interest can take a bite out of your finances. Credit cards provide an easy way to borrow money, but the cost reflects that ease. While many credit cards report the annual interest rate, the fine print tells you how often the company calculates that interest. Daily compounding means that the credit card company calculates the interest one incurs daily and adds that to the balance of the card. A \$1,000 balance on a credit card that charges 20 percent annually is \$200. A \$1,000 balance for a company that compounds daily would change one day's worth of interest:  $20\% \text{ APR} / 365 \text{ days} = 0.05$ , which is about \$54 that would be added to your balance on the first day of the loan (increasing every day after that). Even if compounded only monthly, that's some quick digging on a soon-to-be deep hole.

**Read more**

### Sheida Babakhani Teimouri on secured credit cards

**Q: Do banks and credit unions make money off the security deposits from secured credit cards?**

**A:** In few ways:

1. They can invest the security deposits in the money market or purchase CDs with it, which will earn them interest. If the issuer of the credit card ends up paying interest on the security deposit to the secured credit card holder, the interest will be less than the interest the issuer gets by investing the deposit. So, the difference in the two interest rates will be one source of profit for the issuer.
2. Some issuers charge a one-time application/processing fee.
3. Some issuers charge annual.

Finally, just like an unsecured credit card, the issuer earns money from the transaction fees businesses pay. When you purchase something using your credit card, the company issuing the card charges the business you are purchasing the item from a fee (aka transaction fee).

**Read more**





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